

Iraqis Taking the Lead at Al Suleikh JSS

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2-82 Abn. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Capt. James Peay was starting to feel like a third wheel.

Peay, a battery commander with the 82nd Airborne Division from Nashville, Tenn., was accompanying Iraqi police chief Lt. Col. Ahmed Abdullah on a combined engagement patrol through the east

Baghdad neighborhood of Suleikh.

Whenever they stopped to speak with people on the street, Ahmed did most of the talking. Peay stood off to the side, listening as his interpreter translated. His comments were mostly limited to hellos, good-byes, and thank-yous.

This was Ahmed's show, and Peay was more than happy to give him the spotlight. It's not

that he is shy, Peay said later, it's that, ultimately, stability in Iraq depends on the Iraqi Security Forces - and people like Lt. Col. Ahmed - taking the lead.

Successfully negotiating that difficult transition has become one of the major focuses of the entire war effort, especially since the kick-off of the new security plan for Baghdad, which has placed thousands of additional U.S. and Iraqi forces

in Baghdad communities, often living together in the same compounds.

Peay commands one of those new shared bases - the Suleikh Joint Security Station. For more than three months, paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division have been living and working side-by-side

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Extremists Attack Fourth Mosque in Past Six Days

By Maj. Kirk Luedeke
4-1 Inf. Public Affairs Officer

BAGHDAD- Iraqi National Police responded to an attack on a mosque in a southern portion of the Iraqi capital May 30.

The 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division reported that the Omar al-Farooq Mosque, a Sunni mosque located in the Risalah neighborhood of the Rashid District, had been destroyed by an unidentified explosive device.

This is the fourth attack by extremist groups on religious structures in the past six days.

"These extremists are attempting to fuel the fires of sectarian violence in Baghdad," said Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., commanding general of Multi-National Division - Baghdad, condemning the attacks. "It's appalling that they have to stoop so low and target protected, holy sites within the city."

Iraqi emergency services went to the location to assist, but no casualties were reported during the May 30 attack.

The incidents are under investigation.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Curt Cashour, MNC-I Public Affairs)

Senator Meets with First Team

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., commanding general of the Multi-National Division - Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division, greets Sen. Joe Lieberman, (Ind.-Conn.), at the Karadah Joint Security Station May 30. The Karadah JSS is home to American Soldiers as well as members of the Iraqi Army and police force. Lieberman was visiting Iraq to tour a Baghdad market and meet with American and Iraqi military leaders.

Paratroopers Transition from Lead to Supporting Role

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with the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army at the JSS to coordinate security efforts in Suleikh.

The paratroopers from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, man the JSS 24 hours a day. They have a cramped section of the building to themselves, stacked high with boxes of canned food, water and other supplies. The police stay on the other side of the same building, and the Iraqi soldiers stay in another part of the complex. At least once a day, liaisons from the three units meet in the conference room to discuss operations.

When the JSS was first established, the area was so dangerous that the police rarely left the station. Some days, they went out only to pick up one of the dead bodies regularly dumped in the neighborhood.

Three months later, things have changed. The U.S. presence helped bring the level of violence down significantly.

At the same time, it emboldened the ISF to raise their profile in the area - particularly the police.

"They know we're here to support them, but at the same time, they're getting to a point where they know security as a whole is in their hands," said 2nd Lt. Jesse Bowman, an Alpha Battery platoon leader from Reynoldsburg, Ohio.

The difficult part, now, will be to maintain the security while the U.S. forces step back and the ISF step up.

Peay's patrol with Ahmed May 18, his first as the new battery commander, gave an encouraging glimpse of the future.

Before the patrol started, platoon sergeant Sgt. 1st Class Michael Nichols, of Lewisburgh, W.V., went over tactics and procedures with the Iraqis. When he was satisfied everyone was on the same page, the patrol moved out.

With a phalanx of police and paratroopers around them, Peay and Ahmed spent several hours walking a loop of the

neighborhood around the JSS. They talked to people in their houses, outside washing their cars, on their way to work or anywhere else they found them.

Almost everyone complained about sewage or electricity, which, in the big scheme of things, Peay found promising.

"If they're complaining about the power, security must be pretty good," he said.

Sometimes people came right out of their gates to talk with Ahmed in the middle of the street, an act that newly-arrived platoon leader 1st Lt. Larry Rubal, from Old Forge, Pa., found incredible. At his old unit, people were afraid to be seen talking to U.S. or Iraqi Security Forces.

"I was very surprised by how willing people here were to come out and talk to us in the middle of the road," he said. "They were just very open."

Peay rarely had to ask a question. Ahmed was running the show. At one point Rubal asked his interpreter to make sure a man they were talking to received a pamphlet with the number of a crime tip line. The man produced one from his pocket. Ahmed had already given it to him.

"You're too quick," Rubal said to Ahmed, laughing. Ahmed shrugged.

"He really took the lead and got out there," Peay said afterwards.

Peay said he'd like to build on the day's success by conducting more joint patrols and operations. And whenever possible, he'll continue to keep the U.S. in the background.

"I'd rather our guys just stand outside and have (the ISF) do everything," he said.

In the meantime, Peay has another patrol scheduled with Lt. Col. Ahmed. And as the ISF continue to make gains in securing the streets of Baghdad, it looks like Peay will have to get used to being the third wheel.



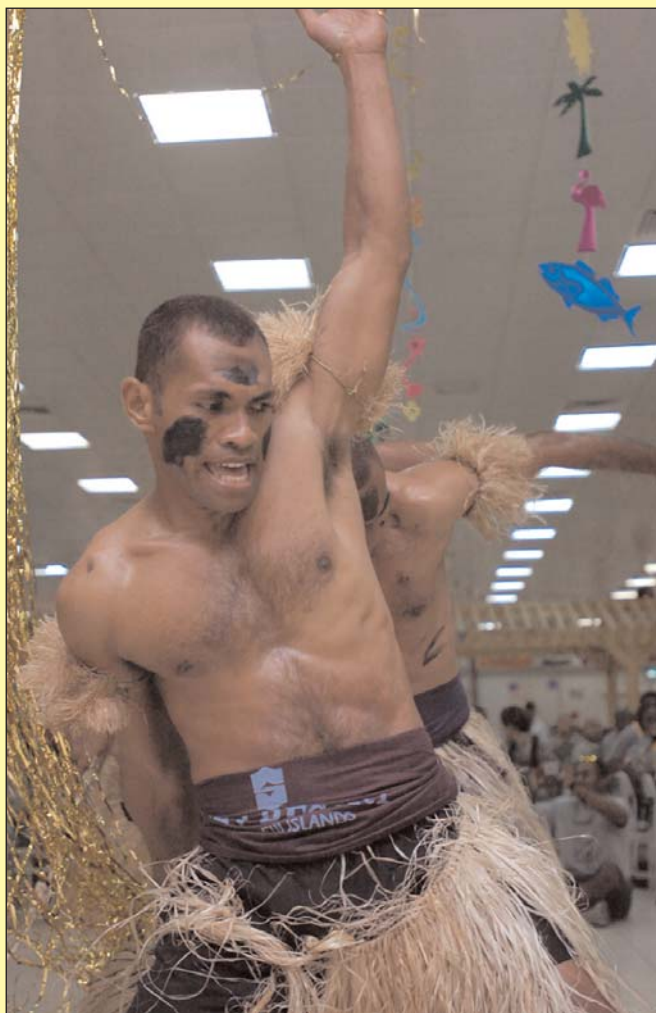
(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2-82 Abn. Public Affairs)

(Left to right) 1st Lt. Larry Rubal, of Old Forge, Pa., interpreter "George," Lt. Col. Ahmed Abdullah, the local police commander, and Capt. James Peay, commander of U.S. forces at JSS Suleikh, walk a patrol together May 18.

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(Photos by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Island-style Celebration!

Soldiers from the 1st Fijian Infantry Regiment, put on a show (left) and gather around to sing (top right) in celebration of Asian/ Pacific Islander Month at the Forward Operating Base Prosperity's Black Jack Bistro May 26. (Bottom right) Sgt. Marie Mageo and Pfc. Suisami Tamafili from the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, perform a dance from their native Pago Pago, American Samoa, in celebration of Asian/ Pacific Islander Month that same day.

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Hanging on by a String: 1st Air Cavalry Brigade Troops Ready Helo for Haul

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - When a Soldier gets injured on the battlefield and needs immediate medical attention, the unit calls in a medical evacuation helicopter to quickly transport them to a medical facility.

This is almost the exact same method used when one of 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division's helicopters is damaged and needs special attention.

When one of 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment's UH-60 Black Hawks was downed April 5, the repairs and parts needed were beyond what they had at Camp Taji. The aircraft needed to be transported to another forward operating base with the necessary equipment in order to be repaired, said New Orleans native Staff Sgt. Quang Nguyen, non-commissioned officer in charge of quality control for Company D, 3-227th.

Instead of hauling the aircraft on the back of a trailer to get it to another FOB for repairs - and putting more Soldiers out on the streets - it was sling-loaded underneath a CH-47 Chinook helicopter, Nguyen said.

When something is sling-loaded, it is hung by a system of ropes called the Unit Maintenance Aerial Recovery Kit, said Lynchburg, Va., native Chief Warrant Officer 2 Donald Chambers, the aviation maintenance technician for Co. D.

"It's the fastest and most expedient way that we can move our aircraft out of



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Dayton, Tenn., native Pfc. William King and Glendale, Ariz., native Spc. Brian Lenhart, both UH-60 Black Hawk repairers and crew chiefs for Co. D, 3rd Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st Air Cav. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., stand on top of a Black Hawk helicopter while rigging the Unit Maintenance Aerial Recovery Kit to its main rotor hub in Camp Taji, Iraq.

an area faster without waiting for ground transportation," he said.

Having that expensive aerial asset hanging hundreds of feet off the ground, it is imperative that Soldiers be detail-oriented when rigging the lines up, said Chambers.

"(Paying attention to detail) is the difference between a successful airlift and a disastrous one," he said. "If the load is off center or it sways too much for the CH-47 to handle, they do have authorization to cut the load."

That is why Co. D's Soldiers go through a dry run before actually doing the real deal, said Nguyen.

"We'll normally start practicing a

week before the actual mission just to get reacquainted with the equipment," he said.

Along with the dry run, before the aircraft can be lifted off the ground, all the rigging has to be checked by multiple people, including the air crew, to ensure a safe airlift, Nguyen added.

With 13,000 to 14,000 pounds hanging at the end of that braided rope, these missions are nothing to be lax about, he said. Once the aircraft is airborne and on its way to its new home, the team who hooked it up feels a sense of achievement.

"It's a weird feeling," Nguyen said. "It's a feeling of accomplishment to see it hanging there."

Arabic Phrase of the Day

rihla

Defined:
flight

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 108
Low: 78



Tomorrow

High: 110
Low: 80



Saturday

High: 110
Low: 78